Assessing Mood Regulation Strategies in Youth
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Abstract

Present research is aims to find out different mood regulation strategies that youth or adults usually adopt to regulate their bad moods. These strategies have been derived from the research work of Thayer, Newman & McClain (1994) and accordingly there effectiveness is measured in local environment.

Key word: Mood regulation, youth, strategies, mood assessment

Introduction:

Many researchers in past few decades have been interested in finding out commonly adopted strategies for self regulation of bad mood and reasons of adopting different strategies by different people. All researches support the argument provided by social learning theory. People learn from their surrounding and imitate it immediately in their behaviors (Bandura, 1963). Bad or negative mood as described in previous research is a state of dejection due to losses and failures. People want to feel good and forget the bad memories of failures. They take support from different activities in this process which apparently seems good but actually are not appreciated by psychologists and researchers. Mood regulation include all those activities and behaviors which are thought to regulate energy to favorable level and reduce tension(Thayer, Peters, Takahashi & Birkhead-Flight, 1993).Mood regulation is considered as an unconscious activity and said that mood is regulated by itself and do not need any attention as all attention is on problem that is the cause of bad mood. People do every thing which they
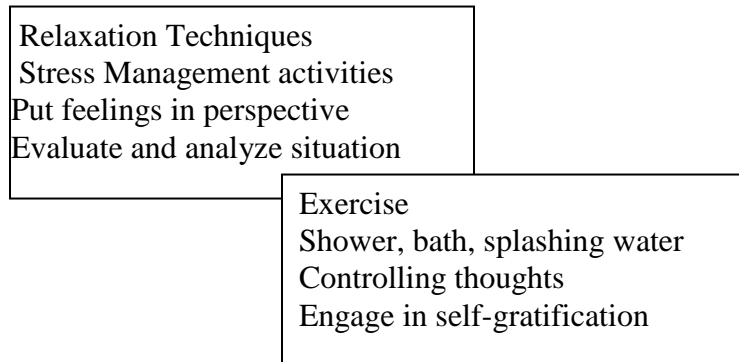
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perceive pleasant to repair their mood. Moods are regulated by different ways learnt from surrounding including aggressive behaviors, pleasant activities, distraction, social support, withdrawal and direct tension reduction by drugs etc. People usually appreciate their ways of mood regulation because they are successful in their strategies and reject any other mean. Research has proved that there are a lot of mood regulation strategies that are unconsciously adopted from surrounding and are not appreciable. Mood regulation strategies can be changed at any stage of life if noticed harmful there fore it is a controlled quality. Adults usually express what they have learnt from surrounding in childhood. Mood regulation is one of the learnt factor differ from person to person and depends on childhood practices and learning. One can change mood regulating behavior after assessing its successfulness and effectiveness from research. In this research main goal is to assess common mood regulation behaviors and interpret their effectiveness in light of previous research conducted in the same field.
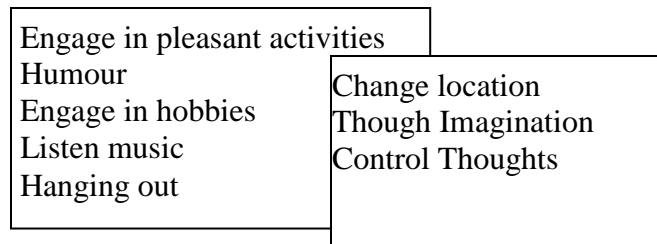
Theoretical Framework

Present research is based on finding out different mood regulation strategies that youth or adults usually adopt to regulate their bad moods. These strategies are presented in research by Thayer, Newman & McClain (1994) and there effectiveness is measured. Six factors are reported in the study, (factor 1= active mood management, Factor 2 = seeking pleasurable activities and distraction, Factor 3 = passive mood management, Factor 4 = Social Support, Ventilation and Gratification, Factor 5 = Direct tension reduction, Factor 6= Withdrawal and avoidance). Different behaviors commonly used to regulate bad mood are grouped under each factor as tabulated and arranged below:
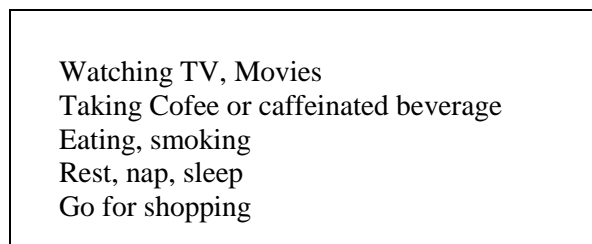
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Factor 1 = Active Mood Management

Relaxation Techniques
Stress Management activities
Put feelings in perspective
Evaluate and analyze situation

Exercise
Shower, bath, splashing water
Controlling thoughts
Engage in self-gratification

Factor 2 = Seeking Pleasurable activities and Distraction

Engage in pleasant activities
Humour
Engage in hobbies
Listen music
Hanging out

Change location
Though Imagination
Control Thoughts

Factor 3 = Passive Mood Management

Watching TV, Movies
Taking Cofee or caffeinated beverage
Eating, smoking
Rest, nap, sleep
Go for shopping

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Factor 4 = Social Support, Ventilation and Gratification

> Making calls or be with some one with whom you feel relax
>
> Engage in emotional activities e.g. cry, scream, laughs
>
> Smoke cigarettes

Factor 5 = Direct Tension Reduction
Use drugs (other than alcohol, cigarettes, or coffee)
Drink alcohol

Factor 6 = Withdrawal- Avoidance
Try to be alone
Avoid thing (person)
Engage in emotional activity
(e.g., cry, scream)

Literature Review

Behavioral scientist and psychologists have always been interested to find out more about mood adoption and regulation in response to external environments. Mood is considered as background for a scene or event against which rest of our mind and behavior play all day long (Larsen, 2000). According to Morris (1992), mood gives us information and signal about internal resources as whether we are able to cope with external environments in sense of threats and challenges. Moods are built gradually (Parkinson, Totterdell, Briner, and Reynolds, 1996) and due to the

perception about external environments. As when person is feeling irritable, frustrated and disagreeable will be showing his behavior differently than a person feeling abundant, happy and secure. Mood is an internal feeling that is induced unconsciously in individuals by lack or fulfillment of resources. Resources vary from person to person and goal relevant resources including money, health or any other adopted goal relevant resources arises demands in individual (Diener & Fujiti, 1995). When outside resources are perceived abundant or scarce to meet present demands will induce good or bad mood. According to Morris (2000), small changes in resource-demand ratio results small changes in moods though these changes are automatic and unnoticed but results in behavioral changes. Mood is about self (cf. Higgins, 1987) and what people perceive about themselves, surrounding and lacking build the mood. If resources are perceived abundant outside moods will be good and the apparent behavior will be investing in present situation or presently adopted goal. Bad mood is the result of perceived scarcity in outside environment that lead to undesired behaviors. Psychological behavior includes pessimism and physiological are smoking, aggression, anger etc and these behaviors further lead to undesired traits. Positive moods can lead effective and faster decision making and enhance the efficiency of decision maker (Isen and Means, 1983). Positive mood enhance the creative thinking by enabling the decision maker to analyze each issue with positive perspective (Isen et al. 1987). People with negative moods considers themselves very insecure and under confident. While people with positive and good moods are confident and they are rated higher in self efficacy (Kavenagh & Bower, 1985) and they use their energies and confidence in positive ways.

An overview of literature suggests that person capacity for self regulation can alter and can be renewed, increased or decreased by will and proper

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practice. (Baumeister, &Heatherton, 1996). Mood regulation is usually referred to bad or negative mood regulation in research literature. People want to feel good (Larsen, 2000, pp, 131) and they usually try to repair their bad or negative moods (Wegner & Pennebaker, 1993). People with positive moods are motivated and strive to stay in the present positive mood and avoid every such task which threat their positive mood (Smith and Shaffer 1991).On the other side people with negative mood are motivated to improve their current state and they like to work any such task which is perceived pleasant to change their current mood (Bless et al. 1990). People with moderately negative moods are motivated to change their present negative mood (Fiedler, 1988) and for such desired mood state they accept any unpleasant task which is perceived to bring them in positive mood. Individual differ from each other on the basis of many traits and patterns they usually follow in different fields of their life and how they cope different issues. Some people usually mess up with small issues by following wrong patterns of mood regulation by unconsciously hurting their own self in the process of mood regulation. While some people might be taught different pattern of mood regulation as what harms and what should be followed (Thayer, 1996). People when grown and taught about positive patterns to regulate their bad or negative mood change their styles of mood regulation if felt wrong. People develop preferred styles of mood regulation and often change mood regulation patterns (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000) if the present patterns are felt wrong.

The unfulfilled desires cause frustration and in result causes aggression (Dollard, et al., 1939) which leads to undesired mood state and behaviors and the cycle run like this if not noticed. Though this aggression is an internal feeling for external surrounding and people tend to show it through

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various behaviors. People aggress because of the perception that aggression will enable them to feel better and they will never aggress if they are aware of the fact that aggression will not change their emotional state and mood (Bushman, 2001, pp 17). Moods are not positively regulated by showing aggressive behaviors unconsciously adopted from the surrounding (Geen & Quanty, 1977).

People usually learn from their surroundings is proved by social learning theory which says that imitation is the trait found in all humans (Bandura, 1983). Mood regulation is usually learnt from surrounding in childhood and express in adolescence and adulthood.

Research Methodology

Sample of 350 students were selected from different colleges who ranged in age from 15 to 25. Most of them were college students and studying in different colleges of Peshawar. We selected students from different colleges as business schools, medical colleges and secondary level. Questionnaire was used comprised of different questions related to mood and mood regulating behaviors (as how often your mood swings? what you usually do when you want to regulate your mood swings? What you usually do when you want to divert your attention. Questions were provided with different options of mood regulating behaviors. Questions as sensitivity to external environment, frequency of mood swinging and few questions related to behaviors to regulate mood were given with likert scale for more clarity.

Result and Discussion:

Aim in the research is not to relate adoption of different strategies to independent factors as it will not give precise results in first place. Research approach to find out the sensitivity of students to external environment,

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frequency of mood swinging and different behaviors they use to regulate the bad mood and reduce tension. Answers showed that 62% of people were much sensitive to external environment (as conflicts, loss of something, study burden, failures etc) 26% were neutral to external environment, 7% were less sensitive and 5% were not very less sensitive to external environment. Frequency of mood swinging (question was that how often your mood swings? options as 1-many times a day, 2- once a day, 3- twice a week, 4- once a week, 5- rarely) was high enough because 57% of students reported option 1 as there mood swings many times a day, 22% answered that there mood swings once a day, 3% of student's mood swings once a week, 8% students said that their mood swings once week and 12% student's mood never swings. Students were asked as they try to find out ways to regulate their bad mood 72% reported that they "always" try to find out ways to regulate their bad mood, 9% appeared with "usually" option, 6% students "seldom" try and 13% students answered that they never try to find out ways to regulate their bad mood.

Mood regulating behaviors were reported as 79% of students reported that they avoid people interaction to regulate mood, 45% quit things and like to be alone to regulate bad mood, 39% engage themselves in religious activities to regulate their mood,52% take rest or nap to regulate bad mood, 15% students overeat to regulate bad mood, 13% said that they listen their favorite music to regulate bad mood, 25% were using drugs (pills to reduce anxiety) to regulate mood, 11% engage in hobbies to regulate bad mood, 22% students call or talk friend to regulate bad mood and divert attention from problems, 38% use smoking to reduce tension and regulate mood, 2% go for long walks (exercise) to regulate mood, 18% go for shopping to regulate bad mood, 11% students take coffee and caffeinated beverages to regulate their mood, 14% students watch TV to regulate their bad mood,

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32% students usually cry and 14% scream to regulate bad mood. Individual item responses were reported and summed to see demographic difference in gender related to each item. Difference were seen only in behaviors as smoking, religious activities and going for shopping. Smoking was reported only by male to regulate bad mood while only 8% males engage themselves in religious activities to regulate bad mood while females 92% females engage themselves in religious activities (this difference is taken from splitting 39% responses for religious activities).

In results only 2% students were reported as engage themselves in active mood management. Exercise and behaviors under active mood management are considered as most effective and successful according to psychotherapists and researchers. Exercise is considered as a very successful strategy to regulate bad mood as it enhance energy and reduce tensions and anxieties that might be the hidden cause of bad mood. (Thayer, Peters, Takahashi, & Birkhead-Flight, 1993) Direct action, control thoughts and social support or social interaction are considered as successful strategies to regulate bad mood (Rippere, 1977). Direct actions (like long walks, exercise), cognition, music and pleasant distraction, social interaction or social support and religious activities are considered as most effective tools to regulate bad mood and reduce tension (Parker & Brown's, 1982).Social support is ranked as a successful strategy after exercise to reduce tension and change bad mood. Avoidance and direct tension reduction are not desirable behaviors to regulate bad mood as person using these strategies have no courage to confront bad mood and try to regulate bad mood by undesirable means and 25% students engage themselves in direct tension reduction behaviors. In above results majority of students engage in avoidance and withdrawal strategy to regulate bad mood as 79% students prefer to avoid people while in bad mood. Gratification or self satisfying

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tool as smoking is not appreciated in previous research and in our research results 38% students engage in such behaviors to regulate bad mood.

Conclusion

In above research we have approached to results that majority of students are sensitive to external environment though 72% of students try to figure out ways to regulate their bad mood. It is also supported by literature that people want to feel good and they accept every task to repair their mood. In this process many students as our research has reported engage themselves in undesirable or ineffective and unsuccessful behaviors to regulate bad mood. Though for time being their mood is regulated but these behaviors weakens them psychologically. Therefore proper study needs to be done on factors influencing mood regulation behaviors. It can include many factors we deal in our childhood or adolescence in our daily life as we learn from our surrounding in this stage and imitate it immediately. Proper counseling is necessary for students to inform them about their behaviors as they are not appreciated by researchers and psychotherapist to regulate bad mood. Proper guidance and help should be provided to students during counseling to change their mood regulation strategies and adopt new effective behaviors

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